



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

TO: Chris Jennings

FROM: Eileen Kennedy *E. Kennedy* SEP 1 1999
Deputy Under Secretary
Research, Education, and Economics

SUBJECT: Follow-Up to Meeting

As promised, attached is a copy of the DHHS/USDA proposal for a White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, and Health. Both Departments quickly arrived at a consensus on the focus of the conference. What we need is an indication of the level of interest from the White House.

I would like to arrange a time; either later this week or next week, when you, Liz Summy, Dr. Paul Coates and myself could have a conference call on how to best proceed. I look forward to talking to you. Best regards.

Attachment

cc: Liz Summy, Office the Secretary, DHHS
Dr. Paul Coates, National Institute of Health
Sarah Bianchi, Office of the Vice President, The White House
✓ Ruby Shamir, Office of the First Lady, The White House

Proposal to the White House Domestic Policy Council for a Conference on Food, Nutrition, and Health

Summary

This is a proposal for a Conference on Food, Nutrition, and Health (exact title to be determined) that will be developed jointly by DHHS and USDA. The proposal is in response to the Senate Appropriations Committee Report accompanying the Senate Appropriations Bill for FY 1999. The Conference (ideally to be held early in 2000) will follow on from the highly successful White House Conference on this subject held in 1969. Briefly, the Conference will provide an opportunity: a) to highlight accomplishments in the areas of Food, Nutrition, and Health since the 1969 gathering; b) to identify continuing challenges and emerging opportunities for the Nation in these areas; and c) to focus on nutrition and lifestyle issues across the lifespan, particularly those that we confront in solving the Nation's epidemic of overweight and obesity. While DHHS and USDA are obvious partners to lead the effort, other Departments (e.g., Education, Transportation, Interior, and perhaps others) can play key roles in the development of a final Conference agenda.

Background

Healthy People 2010: Challenges This plan for the Nation's public health goals for the next 10 years will be released early in 2000. During the previous 10 years, substantial progress was made towards achieving some of the nutrition targets for Healthy People 2000, including an encouraging increase in the intake of fruits and vegetables and the emergence of effective food labeling. On the other hand, there has been a troubling rise in the prevalence of overweight and obesity in the US, despite generally encouraging trends in food intake.

Opportunities Policymakers and program planners at the National, State, and community levels can provide important leadership in fostering healthy diets and physical activity patterns for all Americans. The family and others, such as healthcare practitioners, schools, community organizations, worksites, food-related businesses, and institutional food services, also can play a key role in this process.

Proposed Conference Agenda

1. Accomplishments and Continuing Challenges in Nutrition and Health since the 1969 Conference

The 1969 White House Conference was a seminal event in bringing to public attention the importance of nutrition in the life and well being of the Nation. Emerging from that Conference were several landmark policy efforts that have had a profound and lasting effect, including expansion of the food stamp program, the WIC program, food labeling, and the school lunch program. Hunger was a motive force behind the 1969 White House Conference. While considerable progress has been made in solving the problem of hunger in the US, there remain serious concerns about food security in some segments of the population. There are other issues that could be considered as topics for such a Conference including, but not limited to, nutrition across the lifespan and the disturbing prevalence of iron deficiency in some segments of the population.

2. Nutrition and Lifestyle Approaches to Solving the Nation's Epidemic of Overweight

In the ensuing 30 years, however, excesses in the diet coupled with more sedentary lifestyles have created their own dilemmas. Nearly 55 percent of the US adult population was overweight or obese (Body Mass Index, BMI ≥ 25) in 1988-1994, compared to 46 percent in 1976-1980. Overweight is observed in children above 6 years of age, in both males and females, and in all subpopulations. The increase in overweight and obesity among children is especially worrisome and requires us to focus prevention efforts at our children and youth. This condition also represents a special burden to minority populations. Overweight and obesity are important causes of a number of chronic diseases in the US, including type 2 diabetes and coronary heart disease. Once people become overweight, many find it frustrating and difficult to lose excess weight. A goal, therefore, is to examine ways to prevent weight gain and maintain fitness. For those who are overweight, we need to identify ways for them to remain fit and healthy and to lose unhealthy weight if possible. Achievement of these goals requires a concerted effort on the part of government, individuals, and the private sector in developing methods for prevention and treatment that will reduce the medical and social costs of overweight. Research aimed at understanding basic mechanisms in the development of obesity,

developing the most effective interventions, and translating this knowledge into action (including schools, worksites, communities, etc.), will be a necessary component.

3. Nutrition and Physical Activity Across the Lifespan

By the year 2030, 20% of the U.S. population will be over the age of 65 years. Spending for Medicare and Medicaid is expected to double by 2030 as the population ages. Because chronic illness and disability usually occur late in life, primary prevention efforts directed at diet and physical activity that target all age groups may postpone the onset of chronic illness, and substantially reduce health care costs. We need to focus on programs and efforts to promote normal functioning in older Americans, an issue that follows on from the recent White House Conference on Aging. Examples include the promotion of calcium intake early in life to prevent or delay the onset of osteoporosis later, and establishing community change to foster physical activity. In developing these programs, there are many opportunities for public-private partnerships with groups such as AARP, community organizations, and managed care organizations.

Initiatives and Outcomes

There are a number of related efforts and initiatives planned or underway in each of the agencies:

- USDA and DHHS will release the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans in the Spring of 2000*. New to this version may be a guideline for physical activity.
- USDA and DHHS can jointly sponsor an initiative to develop and disseminate effective obesity prevention programs nationwide.
- USDA has announced its Behavioral Nutrition Research Program to better understand the underpinnings to consumer food and nutrition behavior and to link them to more effective nutrition interventions; funding to begin in FY 2000.
- USDA has an ongoing program on Nutrition Education, with increased activity in FY 2000.
- DHHS will release *Healthy People 2010 in January 2000*. This includes chapters on Nutrition/Overweight and Physical Activity/Fitness, and will likely include a measure of weight status as a Leading Health Indicator.
- National Institutes of Health (examples of current and ongoing programs)
 1. Study of Outcomes of Weight-Loss (SHOW) Trial: funding begins in FY 1999; patient recruitment begins in FY 2000; seven-year trial.
 2. Innovative Approaches to Prevention of Obesity: funding in FY 1999 and FY 2000.
 3. Diet and Cardiovascular Disease Risk in Children and Adolescents: ongoing program.
 4. Decreasing Weight Gain in African-American Preadolescent Girls: a multi-center clinical trial with funding in FY 1999 and FY 2000.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (all in the planning stage)
 1. Support for collaborations between managed care organizations, employers, and worksites to develop and implement physical activity programs.
 2. Start-up support for programs to promote and evaluate the effectiveness of physical activity in adults and its impact on health care costs.
 3. National initiative to restore and demonstrate effectiveness of physical education in schools.
 4. National campaign to promote neighborhood physical activity (e.g., bike trails, recreational developments).
 5. Develop and implement state-based programs to prevent obesity and promote physical activity.
 6. Disseminate effective programs to promote healthy aging in older Americans.

There are a number of potential deliverables and outcomes:

- Announcement of a plan to initiate a report from the Surgeon General on overweight and obesity.
- Development of an Action Plan to Prevent Obesity, drawing upon the Conference and utilizing broad partnerships.
- Release of a USDA Report on Successful Nutrition Promotion for Under-served Populations (Spring 2000).